

San Antonio, TX - Today, President Bush signed into law a bill that would allow fencing along the border between the U.S. and Mexico. The bill, called the Secure Fences Act, would authorize the construction of a 700-mile fence along the U.S. border with Mexico. The measure passed the House in the waning days before the summer recess.

On today's signing, Congressman Charlie Gonzalez remarked, "the timing could not have been better. In the lead up to the election, with 12 days left and the war in Iraq dogging them in the polls, Republicans fall back to a tried and tested issue of illegal immigration in the hopes of stirring up their base to keep their hold on Congress."

He noted, "signing this bill now is what you do when your party is in trouble and needs something to turn the tide, so why not raise the specter of foreigners overtaking the country. A border fence is what you do when you don't have a real plan to reform immigration."

House Republican leaders had pledged to take up illegal immigration reform and make it a campaign issue. They failed to act on the measure this year when the Senate voted on a bill they claimed amounted to "amnesty";

Congressman Gonzalez added, "no one disagrees that we need to secure our borders and protect our nation's sovereignty. To accomplish this, the administration should have dedicated real resources to protect the border such as hiring more border patrol agents because a fence cannot substitute for a human being to keep us secure. Moreover, there needs to be aggressive worksite enforcement against employers who encourage illegal immigration by blatantly hiring undocumented workers."